Nonviolence in social sciences: towards a consensual definition

Noviolencia en las Ciencias Sociales: aproximación a una definición consensuada

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Abstract

Non violence, non-violence or nonviolence? Nonviolence can be defined as a methodology, an ethical-political doctrine, a way to build peace that is oriented towards a coherent philosophy, seeking a love of knowledge, experimentation and life. In the Latin American and Spanish academia there is ignorance about how to describe this concept. This article tries to find a consensus on this controversy. The controversy lies in its morpho-syntactic confusion, attributing definitions or inappropriate actions. We believe that the building of a consensus definition needs to be from what it is not (on the various forms of violence), the presentation of some principles-values (Refusal to Kill/ Dignified life; To search the truth/Tolerance and not having the truth; Active dialogue and listening/Empathy and humanism; Alternative and creative modes of thought/ Anthropological optimism and opening) on which it may be based and the arguments concerning the relationship means-purposes and consequences of the use of violence (especially with some historical experiences). All of this should allow us to better define such a complex concept as nonviolence.

Key words: Nonviolence, means, ends, violence, consensus, moral history.

Resumen

¿No violencia, no-violencia o noviolencia? La noviolencia puede ser definida como una metodología, una doctrina ético-política, una manera de construir la paz que se orienta hacia una filosofía coherente que busca un amor por el conocimiento, la experiencia y la vida. En el mundo académico latinoamericano y español existe una ignorancia acerca de cómo escribir este concepto. En este artículo se trata de encontrar un consenso sobre esta controversia. La controversia está en su confusión morfo sintáctica, en atribuirle definiciones o acciones inadecuadas. La construcción de una definición consensuada creemos que ha de partir de lo que no es (respecto a las diversas formas de violencia), de la presentación de algunos principios-valores (Negarse a Matar/ vida digna; Para buscar la verdad/Tolerancia y no tener la verdad absoluta; El diálogo y la escucha activa/La empatía y el humanismo; Modos alternativos y creativos del pensamiento/optimismo antropológico y apertura) que la pueden constituir, así como en relación a argumentos como la relación medios-fines y las consecuencias del uso de la violencia (especialmente con algunas experiencias históricas). Todo ello debería permitirnos una mejor definición de un concepto tan complejo como la noviolencia.

Palabras clave: noviolencia, medios, fines, violencia, consenso, historia moral.

1. Introduction

There is no scientific consensus on nonviolence that would classify it as a specific discipline within the academic world, with the same status, for example, political science, sociology and philosophy. It would have to aspire to enter the temple of the social sciences and the scientific method. We would be closer to understanding nonviolence as a school of thought, a set of points humanists view as a critical method of interpreting reality, etc. However, regardless of the status of science (although part of the Peace Studies), it is important to understand that nonviolence is a very accessible tool valid to argue, criticize and reflect about the dominant paradigm. Nonviolence, for now, aims to influence social sciences to reduce or eliminate rigid conceptions, closed dichotomies and dogmas, and to analyze several violent traits of the western eurocentric thought, with the ultimate aim of proposing a revision and opening of the same.

Identifying nonviolence with certain historical experiences such as the independence process in India, the fall of the Berlin Wall or the collapse of Apartheid is a common starting point. Similarly, nonviolence has been associated with certain historical personalities, such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Aug San Suu Kyi, Petra Kelly, Dorothy Thompson and Nelson Mandela. All of them possess the great benefit of having provided examples which permit us to identify models or processes of development with a singular and particular nature, which are detached from other political-theoretical models concurrent with the hegemonic paradigm of violence. However, nonviolence, in spite of the press presence it has received in recent decades continues to be remarkably unfamiliar.

In any case, given the previous examples, it is now possible to identify nonviolence as a form of socio-economic practice, and a collection of strategies and procedures of socio-political contention, struggle and pressure. Additionally, it may be acknowledged as a doctrine of social change which has enjoyed relative success wherever it has been applied or, at least, in such cases where there have been a series of conditions and circumstances favourable to the culmination of its expressions.[1]

But we start with a difficulty, the knowledge, typologies and tools that we know are associated with the paradigm of violence (the theoretical developments about violence and to the violent practices of the science and philosophy, the original violent nature of the western way of thinking and its link with the violence of the events or hegemonic academic trends: functionalism, realism, statism, etc.), in some cases legitimizing its existence. Both peace and nonviolence studies have to make their way through great troubles, in this dominant paradigm, trying to make academics and students see reality from a more pluralistic perspective (Drago, 1991; Galtung, 1996).

1. The literature on nonviolence is extensive and involves different approaches and points of view, from philosophy by Robert Holmes in the lead, Pat Patfoort's anthropology, Psychology of Kool, Hare and Teixeira, the Political views of Gandhi, Sharp, Ackerman and Kruegler, the multidisciplinary and strategic views of Burrowes or Nepsdad Víd. Daniel M. Mayton (2009).

2. The concept of nonviolence

It is possible that the same happens to nonviolence as well as many other concepts, such as aggression, peace, power, violence, etc., which include a wide range of interpretations and theoretical elements. Given that concepts are not only intellectual constructions, but, above all social ones, and therefore subject to a historical spatial-temporal context, this background has shaped and given them a certain sense and rationale. This implies that they are not static, but are open to interpretation; and in fact, this is indeed the case, and not only regarding different civilisations or cultures, but also from diverse academic postures and perspectives. Similarly, this is true for nonviolence, which refers to a cultural construction, with theoretical and practical dimensions, which are found in a historic-conceptual phase of growth and vitality but, additionally, of discrepancy regarding its limits and scope (Balducci & Grassi, 1983; Díaz del Corral, 1989; McCarthy Ronald & Sharp, 1997; Barash, 2000; Nagler, 2001; Kurlansky, 2008).

This way, it has become clear that nonviolence has increasingly been associated in unfavourable contexts, with a variety of topics, falsehoods and limitations, which non-violent theorists have attempted to counterattack with various types of argumentations, identified in the following parts:

2.1. Conceptual *morphosyntax*

The first matter is the problem of how the term should be written. Is it better separated (non violence), with a hyphen (non-violence) or as one word (nonviolence)?

The first meaning, "non violence", can easily be confused with relations or conditions "without violence" of a physical or direct kind, or with *a-violence*. Similarly, as a collective, there may exist many examples of these types of situations in every day life. However, these have to be clearly differentiated from and, inclusively, identified with another distinct concept so as not to lead to confusion of identifying it with an ethical-political theory, or with a assortment of activities and procedures of pressure or struggle.[2]

The version "non-violence" owes its origin to the interpretation which the British Colonials made in reference to the forms of protest of Gandhi's followers (India and South Africa). The media perceived nuances between a kind of armed resistance and collaboration with the government in London, amid both, there were other possibilities.

The forms of boycott, passive resistance and non-cooperation, culminated in being diagnosed as the term non-violence, as it consisted neither in the pure absence of violence, nor pure political obedience. This manner of referring to the term was utilised in the historiography of social movements and changes in the typology of struggle –by, for example, Bondurant (1958), Case (1972)[3], Gregg (1969), etc.– for a long time, and is still

2. Students and teachers of peace studies, in English language, should know that in Spanish, Portuguese or French nonviolence is still written separately. In fact, the (2014) *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española de la Lengua* Madrid, does not accept nonviolence written together.

3. The original book is *Non-Violent Coercion* (1923).

used even now, as it is clearly distinguished from the previous term, "non violence". Likewise, this manner of expression has been identified with certain ethical foundations of religions (Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism), in interpreting the meanings and values of *ahimsa*, which proceed from a literal translation to Occidental languages, as non-violence.

Finally, the origin of the combined term, nonviolence, can probably be attributed to the Italian thinker Aldo Capitini (1992: 438), who, in 1931, began to use it to refer to the ethical-religious concept of *ahimsa*, in addition to those struggles undertaken by Gandhi and his followers, identifying the term nonviolence with that of satyagraha, invented by the Indian leader. Capitini intended to reduce the strong dependence of the concept on the term "violence". Consequently, he wanted to emphasise the importance in identifying nonviolence with a humanist conception, of a being spiritual opening for conflictive human relations. Capitini, on coining the term 'nonviolence', intended that it was understood not only as a collection of techniques which renounce the use of arms and violence, but additionally, but as a *constructive and open* programme of a type of ethical-political, social and economic emancipation, which proposed to reduce human suffering to the minimum (Pontara, 1980; Altieri, 2008).

Bearing in mind the notable acceptance that nonviolence has enjoyed throughout social science literature, and particulary Peace Research, it is not strange that, in a similar manner, it was also integrated rapidly within the collection of the Latin languages.

2.2. Socio-political confusion regarding semantics

Part of the historical-conceptual process of incomprehension and confusion that affects nonviolence relates to knowing how, why and who have catalogued or analysed the concept following distant perspectives and terms of reference (López Martínez, 2006: 21-27). For example, if we concede that revolutions accomplished with violence, via armed struggle or coups by means of the use of force, as being acceptable within the social sciences, then it seems evident that nonviolence is "anti-revolutionary". Similarly, if interpretations of psychological and social changes are associated with political *realism* or a Machiavellian conception of power (the nonviolence is comparable to "idealism" or with a "Utopiane" vision).

Likewise, nonviolence would be associated with "passivity" (passive resistance), as indeed it was denominated by the British Colonials in India, due to their identification of violence with two aspects: firstly, the heroic aspect they exercised; and secondly, with terrorism, exercised by their enemies, leaving the passive character for Gandhi (Tähtinen, 1979: 84).

Additionally, nonviolence has come to be related with "impotence" (identifying power with violence) (Kurlansky, 2008: 147). It has been said, moreover, that nonviolence is "inefficient" compared with violence (the opposite view in Chenoweth, 2008 & 2011). If the fundamental element is to consider human suffering, nonviolence is the most efficient means of political struggle and, consequently, it is Machiavellianism that can be ascertained as being one of the most inefficient (L'Abate, 2008: 105-170).

This catalogue of confusion (Schock, 2003; López Martínez, 2004: 784-85; Martin, 2008) extends further: Nonviolence is claimed to be a form of "political acquiescence", in other words, another variety of socio-political consent and assent, of silent compliance or pure "voluntary servitude",[4] thereby disregarding its polymorphic vitality which ranges from various classes of boycott and non-cooperation to civil disobedience and wider forms of resistance. Likewise, it has been attributed as being "naïve", or of practicing "socio-ethical indifference" or exercising a type of political "laissez-faire", to do the game to the power, "Tactically and Stategically Inferior" (Gelderloos, 2007).

Apparently, this is not only a sample of the incorrect definitions attributed to nonviolence, but also demonstrates a clear example of how social sciences do not contribute, on many occasions, to the clarification of conceptual and terminological problems, but instead, to confuse them, as, lest we forget, scientific discourse is replete with logic criteria and biased rationality regarding all types of positions (ethical, political, etc.), accompanied by a supposed neutral status, utility analysis, systematicity, etc.

2.3. Nonviolence as contrary and distinct from violence

Another way of analysing the term is to accept that when we speak of nonviolence we are ratifying the negation of violence, not only in the sense of challenge and rejection of its use, or to be in opposition to violence due to its legacy of damage and human suffering, the burden of anti- and counter- values that it bears, etc.; but also because when we speak of nonviolence, we are referring to a theoretical-practical doctrine very distinct from a mere negation of violence.

What type of violence is rejected? Three types of violence are to be used; that is, direct (active physical) violence, cultural violence and structural violence. This typology is now widely accepted within Peace Research. We shall not enter here due to problems of space, into the numerous difficulties of interpretation and conceptualisation, etc, that these definitions imply (Galtung, 1996).

Here we only intend to address some issues of the vast number of problems caused by the use of these concepts: limits, interpretation, etc., especially in relation to what nonviolence can mean, as opposed to anything that generates violence in a generic concept.

By *direct violence*, we refer to a classical understanding of violence, that is, acts (or omissions) causing damage, suffering and even death in people: killing, kidnapping, torture, and war. More specifically, this type of violence can be characterised in the following way: violence is produced when (Pontara, 1978: 19-32):

- Subject A –a person, group, State etc.- causes suffering or physical harm to another, Subject B;

4. Precisely Gene Sharp (1973) draws from Etienne de la Boetiè and his concept of *voluntary servitude* to criticise how it is imagined by Boetiè, that exercising citizenchip, dissent and nonviolent protest start by abandoning or disposal of ´voluntary servitude´, in other words nonviolent action is a form of distancing ourselves – in a radical way - from voluntary servitude.

- when A does this contrary to the will and wishes of B;
- when A does this in an intentional manner; and,
- when it is carried out via the employment of physical force.

The most brutal means employed are bellicose, armed military techniques (total war, nuclear warfare, guerrilla, holocaust, terrorism, etc.). Faced with this, nonviolence expresses itself in diverse ways, such as: pacifism (the rejection of war), objection of conscience (refusal to kill in the name of, or on orders of, the State), etc.; and especially, in the deployment of a wide collection of methods and procedures non-sanguine socio-political struggle without the use of violent arms, but instead employing many other mechanisms which are in direct relation with *social power*, and with political consent and obedience, which are known as nonviolent methods of nonviolent action (Sharp, 1973, 1980, 1994, 2000, 2009, 2012), also Gandhi's *Satyagraha* (Diwakar, 1946; Shridharani, 1972; Sharp, 1979; Juergensmeyer, 1984; Galtung, 1992; Gandhi, 2001).

By *cultural violence*, we mean those aspects of civilisation, education and socialisation that are exemplified in symbols, religion, language, art, ideology, the sciences, etc., which may serve to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence (Galtung, 1990: 291-305). Confronted with this, nonviolence denounces bellicose and violent culture: armamentism, militarism, sexism, ethnocentrism, destructive competitiveness, etc., and constructs, articulates, reinforces and propagates a *culture of peace* (human rights, solidarity, distribution of wealth, the right to peace, etc.) which would include education, socialisation, means of communication and other civilising aspects (Unesco, 1996), and also *neutral peace* (Jiménez, 2009; 2014).

Of the three types of nonviolence identified by Galtung, "cultural violence" is perhaps the most problematic one, particularly because it is defined as "ancillary", i.e. functional for the perpetration of the other types of violence. Culture is in itself an arena in which violence can be perpetrated (forced assimilation, "cultural genocide", "colonization of the minds"). At present, it could be useful to add the concept of "symbolic violence" as developed by Bourdieu and Passeron, 2001), the mechanisms of colonial cultural violence as developed in post-colonial studies (one of its origins could be in Fanon, 1963).

Finally, *structural violence* is that which is exercised in an indirect manner and does not necessarily have to be intentional (although there indeed can be intentional structural violence). It manifests itself in those socio-political structures which impede the fulfilment of the human person or that make difficult the satisfaction of fundamental basic human necessities (Galtung, 1969: 167-191). Faced with this, nonviolence instigates a process of consciousness and conversation in order to recognise who are the victims left behind by these political, economic and social systems, (and why). Nonviolence deals with providing antidotes and solutions in the here and now, without waiting for the (possibly violent?) revolution to free the needy and dispossessed. This, according to Norberto Bobbio (1992), may refer to a type of combined process which gradually integrates pacifism in the *means*, pacifism within *institutions* and pacifism in the *ends*.

As can be ascertained, every form of violence corresponds to a theoretic-practical dimension of nonviolence which extends from unarmed methods of struggle without bloodshed to creative "constructive programmes" for the welfare of all (sarvodaya).

3. Some fundamental principles and values of nonviolence

Deliberating about principles and values (i.e. The principle is not to kill, not to cause damage or suffering; the value is living a life in dignity.) serves to draw up some guidelines in order to discuss certain limits, contexts and parameters within which nonviolent doctrine may be developed to establish greater theoretical precision. I have only taken into account four elements, because I am seeking the consensus of the community of the social sciences (López Martínez, 2001; 2004).

3.1. Refusal to Kill (thou shalt not kill)

Realistically, it would be better to manifest this in a positive sense: preservation of life with dignity. However, nonviolence would go further, and express this as a task of *humanising* humanity (López Martínez, 2006). Likewise, the term can be expressed in the concept of *ahimsa*, that is, not to damage, harm, wound or cause suffering as well as, logically, not to kill. Or, to be more precise, to attempt to limit, to the maximum, the use of violence on living beings (Chapple, 1993; Pontara, 2006).

The principle of action based on the refusal to do harm or injury is a fundamental and prescriptive value in nonviolent doctrine, but it cannot be qualified as an absolute mandate under any circumstances. A unanimousness of criteria does not exist when interpreting this precept. For some, the use of self-defence would be within these reservations, but it would not be unique.

Obviously, when we talk of nonviolence, it is not precise if we refer only towards other people, or additionally to ourselves and, inclusively, animals. Nonviolence proposes that this mandate should be extended, so, for example, would certain forms of euthanasia and suicide be incompatible with nonviolence? It is important to remember that this exhortation recommends a life with dignity and the lowering of levels of suffering, but also, that and no-one else, are the owners of our own lives. In the first case, a patient in an incurable terminal stage may consciously wish to live no longer, and may request a death with dignity. In the second, some situations in concentration and extermination camps may motivate suicide as a final act of dignity and protest (Also against the Vietnam War in the 60s where some Buddhist monks bonze burned themselves). It does not seem that either case would be completely incompatible with a nonviolent vision of these human conundrums.

Finally, some of the many possible interpretations in this part consider the renunciation of the will to kill or harm not only as a *duty*, but additionally as a vindication of nonviolence as a *right*, in addition to the possibility that it may be considered as a norm,

according to which no institution (the State, law, etc.) may strip nonviolent choice, the choice not to kill, or the right to preserve this level of conscience.

3.2. The search for truth

The truth is quite a multi-faceted, slippery and polemic concept. We are not simply referring to an epistemological, ethical, religious, or another type of ideology, but rather to an attitude regarding the truth. Without entering into the complex Gandhian conception of the Truth (*Sat:* being, essence, absolute, etc.), it is important to highlight the Gandhian contribution in contemplating the truth as experience, a search and predisposition: as if it were a pleasant adventure. It is a truth which always offers limited (as opposed to absolute) answers, which exposes us to the unknown, and motivates opening and unconstrained life (Gandhi, 1940 & 1973; Bondurant, 1958: 21-25 & 33-34; Tähtinen, 1979: 24-35; Sharma, 2000).

In the same way, *searching for* the truth in nonviolence precludes distinguishing it from *possessing* the truth. To seek is the way of inquiry and investigation, to overcome uncertainties, errors and risks. For this reason, it is important to be in harmony with other non-violent principles, such as the sense of *fallibility* (that is to know that our truths exist within a certain logic, a system of thought or context, etc., and that these truths be subject to partial and limited changes), and *reversibility* (acting in such a manner that our actions may be emended, rectified and corrected) (Pontara, 2004: 493-498).

3.3. Active dialogue and listening

Dialogue is an essential human activity. To dialogue is not only to talk, to give reasons to oneself or others, but also to listen. Dialogue and listening are principles of communicative solidarity, based on the recognition of the value of the word and the capacity we have to recognise each other as human beings (Honneth, 1997; Martínez Guzmán, 2001: 75-116 & 189-203). It goes without saying that such principles may be extended to animals, though they express their feelings in different ways.

Dialogue also incorporates us within a landscape of uncertainty, of open communication, where a monopoly of certainty does not exist. It is the recognition of an equitable dignity, and an exploration of one's own territory, as well as that of another (Rosenberg, 2003).

In this sense, nonviolence signifies a frame of reference to another language, that which bestows on the word a more exact and deeper value, and which allows a recovery or intensification in the trust and hope of our identity and meaning as human beings, prescribing reason instead of brute strength. Finally, it is dialogue that permits continued contact with a counterpart, which can be interpreted as the ground for reconciliation between various parties in confrontation (Habermas, 1987).

3.4. Alternative and creative modes of thought

This implies an awareness of the possibilities to transform the reality, and the procedural nature of these transformations, of our consciousness which can, in turn, change the nature of things and ourselves, creating other models and interpretive paradigms which have a multiplicity of approaches and developments, amongst other factors.

To think and create in an alternative mode of reality implies, on many occasions, moral resistance, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation with what is considered to be an iniquity, or non-collaboration with depravity. To think or reflect creatively implies the delegitimisation of the use and rationale of violence, the refusal to be seduced by its easy and immediate solutions, or by its immediate and superficial results. Acting in a creative way is a sense and sentiment of belonging to humanity, of confidence in the human race, a symbol of intelligence. This may connote going against the flow, doing the unusual or surmounting many obstacles.

This principle, the alternative from nonviolence, implies an ability to think and do differently compared to convention against the dominant. Being alternative has an intrinsic power, with fighting ability, of transformation, overcoming adversity, social and mental impairments. In many cases it is to go against the flow, breaking frontiers and fueling utopias (Dolci, 1996; Runco, 2007).

4. In favour of nonviolence

We are going to proceed to support some of the previously analysed principles with two types of discourse, key dimensions or problematic dimensions of political action and nonviolent political theory: the first, the relation between the means and the ends (Pontara, 1974, 1980 & 1983; López Martínez, 2006: 45-68); and the second, with regards to the possible consequences of the systematic use of violence (Pontara, 1980; Zunes & Kurtz, 1999: 309 ss.; López Martínez, 2001: 210-223).

4.1. The relation between the means and the ends

What type of relations can be established between the means and the ends of nonviolent perspective? Philosophically, it is assumed that all actions can be analysed as means in order to accomplish an end or purpose. Equally, though, it has to be admitted that certain actions can be ends in themselves. Likewise, while some actions are motivated by an end, others are not, and can therefore be categorised as a coincident means and end. This, indeed, could be the case with nonviolence, which should be considered both as a means and an end in itself.

However, relations of a means-ends type can be also interpreted according to other criteria. Opting for two: the first, regarding the *moral valuation* of actions, and the second, with regards to the degree of *effectivity* of these actions.

In the first case, we can say that if we use means by which innocent people may die, or we have to use torture to obtain valuable information, or extend suffering for the sake of a specific policy, then, we could say that these means are immoral, and therefore, they are inadequate means for a moral purpose. The limit to this proposal is the «doctrine of double effect», in some occasions we could choose a lesser evil; however, this doctrine has often been an opportunity to legitimate morally improper means. (Pontara, 1974)

With regards to a valuation of the effectivity of the means-ends relation it can be stated that certain means (as all instruments feature a limited degree of efficiency due to space, time, or their own nature, etc.) do not always permit the accomplishment of certain ends, or rather, that certain limitations and boundaries may exist between the means (following a criteria of efficiency) and the ends. These types of limits are quite common, as the Spanish saying goes, "you can't reach the moon by using a chair".

How can this be considered from the nonviolent perspective? One of the most frequent contentions is that an established end should not be obtained by whatever means; and as for each means used implies a determined end, if certain means (or certain actions) are employed this would signify that certain ends would be obtained. Consequently, the maxim attributed to Machiavelli, "the ends justify the means" should be rejected, as in order to obtain an objective it is necessary to use only the instruments precisely adapted for this purpose. Not everything is of use, or is efficient, or for that matter, ethical to reach an aim. If this is so, an inescapable *relational condition* can be attributed to this means-ends relation, similar to Gandhi's analogy of the seed and the tree: from an apple seed it is only an apple tree and its fruit, the apple, that can be cultivated. Gandhi said: "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." (Gandhi, 1944: 39).

However, dominant ideologies tend to legitimise the use of violence by affirming that the means justify the ends, in other words, that a just end legitimised the use of any unjust means. Nevertheless, it is curious that we have been trained to sacrifice the present for the future, preferring the distraction in the purposes to the precision of the means. Accepting even those means that contradict the purposes. We tend to reject or postpone a here and now, by hypothetical purposes. From the point of view of a philosophy of nonviolence, it is reported that there is a big risk of delaying justice and that a "good violence" is imposed as a lesser evil for a just end. Even the "principled nonviolence" reminds us that political efficacy can be measured not only by the results but how and in what way they are achieved.

4.2. The consequences of the use of violence

We have already pointed out that the concept of nonviolence can be used as a negation of violence, and also that its meaning conveys much more than just this. This will

be done with reference to four arguments (Pontara, 1978; Zunes, 1999; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2008):[5]

- Where can the spatial-temporal saturation point of nonviolence be found? Violence has been interpreted as the midwife of history and, *a fortiori*, it must be understood that no significant change can be made without a dose, usually of large proportions, of political violence. The immediate question is, what are the limits and breaking points of violence in the world? Above all, this raises a lesson, when is it going to be learned that violence has demonstrated its considerable limitations, and that it does not accomplish all that it is intended? In other words, it would appear evident that violence has a high degree of inefficiency.
- The dehumanising and stultifying tendencies of violence: violence culminates in desensitising those who use it, producing an *alexitimia* (or incapacity to express feelings), which permits them to commit acts of cruelty and barbarity. The fact is that these people lose their sense of moral identity as human beings. Torturers, executioners, abusers, etc., weaken, *in extremis*, their human responses, making them capable of increasing their ability to commit atrocities as if it were simply another job. Somehow, preparation for war leads to those types of situations in which there is a complete alienation between the victim and the perpetrator. In such cases, violence not only destroys the victims but also their executioners.
- Violence causes the progressive impoverishment and degradation of the ends it pursues: one of the problems of violence and armed struggle, irrespective of the cause, lies in the danger associated with removing the contents and twisting the just ends aspired to, by converting violent means into ends in their own right. Violence ends up eroding many of the moral principles, distancing it from the just origins of a cause and transforming it according to the means.
- The danger of the militarization of society and individuals: the prolonged and systematic use of violence culminates in commanding higher quotas of resources, decisions and power. The disseminated use of violent means has consolidated certain tendencies towards authoritarianism, despotism and other forms of arbitrariness. The exceptional concludes in being natural, and the military impregnates ever greater spheres of civil and private life, thereby orientating policies and values. It may terminate in leading to certain vicious circles and states which are difficult to escape.

5. I am aware that there are, at least, two views that can help to understand better these consequences of prolonged use of violence in conflict. An ideological position (Gandhi, Pontara) and a pragmatic position (Sharp, Schock, etc..). Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) help us to put this debate under other parameters: concrete results about the nonviolent struggle that are more successful than armed struggle; and preferences of citizens in choosing nonviolent ways.

5. Historical experiences of nonviolence

We can refer to nonviolence (in other instances also named civil resistance, unarmed insurrections, nonviolent struggle, strategic nonviolent conflict, etc.) at least in a generic sense that is, fully or partially conscious and, therefore, not necessarily motivated by an ideological, philosophical or ethical-political standpoint, as being a very present behaviour throughout human history.

In this sense, a brief journey through history allows us to discover many examples of action and forms of thinking and interpretation of the world which, nowadays, can be qualified as nonviolent or which share certain characteristics with those which we presently denominated as nonviolent. In many of these examples, a long and costly process of de-legitimisation of, and necessity in finding concrete alternatives to violence, or an advance in what we define as human can be perceived.

Likewise, investigating nonviolence in history, and not necessarily the reverse, allows us not only to interpret the history of humanity in a different way, but also to observe many previously imperceptible facts. This is particularly true when, we interpret such events and historical processes in light of the rule of minimising levels of suffering and damage as much as possible.

Lessons can be extracted from the ancient classical eras, as illustrated by Aristophanes in *Lysistrata*, and Sophocles´ *Antigone*, the examples set by Socrates, Epicurus´ *Letter to Menoceus* on happiness, Greek-Roman stoicism, Senecanism, and Marcus Aurelius´ *Thoughts*. In addition, there are the actions of the early Christians and their forms of resistance and interpretation of the temporality of power; this continued throughout the medieval Christian (Francis of Assisi), the modern world (Amish, Mennonites, Quakers, de la Boétie´s, Bartholomew de Las Casas, W. Godwin, H.D. Thoreau, W. Ladd, Elihu Burritt, etc.) (Kurlansky, 2008)

The modern idea of nonviolence, on the other hand, has not only been nourished by these doctrinal, philosophical and religious sources, but has also received many contributions, in the modern age, from Utopiane and scientific socialism, feminism, liberalism and democratism, amongst others.

Personalities such as Ballou, Thoreau, Ruskin, Tolstoy or Gandhi had been Masters of specific nonviolence, that is, nonviolence in a conscious, intentional, ideological and doctrinal manner. Moreover, they have been accompanied by many others, like Jane Addams, E. Greene Balch, Albert Schweitzer, Daniel Berrigan, Martin Luther King, Petra Kelly, Helder Camara, Lanza del Vasto, Abdul Gaffar Khan, Dorothy Day, Aldo Capitini, Danilo Dolci, Vinoba Bhave, Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, Thich Nhat Hanh, Chico Mendes, George Lakey, Guillermo Gaviria and so on (Marescotti, 2000), and the academic world (Brian Martin, Alberto L'Abate, Giuliano Pontara, Michael Randle, Johan Galtung, Glenn Paige, Jean Marie Muller, E. Krippendorff, Th. Ebert, J. Semelin, etc.), All these have been, in some way, sources of inspiration for an ulterior development of a diverse array of historical experiences (McCarthy & Sharp, 1997; Carter, Clark & Randle, 2006). I propose the following classification (López Martínez, 2000: 294-295):

- *The struggles against Colonial domination, or similar phenomena:* the Independence of the Thirteen Colonies (1776), the resistance of the Russian domination of Finland (1899- 1904), the satyagraha struggles in South Africa and India (1905- 1947), the German resistance of the Ruhr military occupation (1923), the general strike in Algeria (1961), the Tibetan struggle against China (from the 1970s to 1990s), Lithuania (the 1990s), the Palestinian Intifada (1987), the fight for independence in Eastern Timor (2000), etc. (Bartkowski, 2013; Pearlman, 2011; Sutherland y Meyer, 2000):
- *The struggles against dictatorial and totalitarian regimes:* the collapse of the Kapp Putsch (1920), the resistance in various European countries (Holland, Denmark, Sweden, etc.) to the Nazi occupation in 1949-1945, the Latin American resistance to various dictatorships in the 1930s-1950s, the popular revolt in Czechoslovakia against the Soviet occupation (1968), the Iranian Revolution (1978-1979), Poland (1980s), the "People Power" movement in the Philippines (1986), in Burma (1988), the counter-revolution in Russia (1991), the downfall of President Suharto in Indonesia (1998), Serbia's Civil Revolution against the Milosevic regimen in 2000, Colour Revolutions, Arab Spring (2010-11), etc., (Sémelin, 1989; Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994; Randle, 1994; Ackerman & Duvall, 2000; Chenoweth y Stephan, 2011; Schock, 2004; Shell, 2005; Roberts y Garton Ash, 2009, Sharp y Paulson, 2005; Zunes, 1999;).
- *The vindication of rights and freedoms:* the civil and political rights movements in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s, the Sarvodaya campaign in India and Sri Lanka in the 1950s, Larzac in France (1970s), the movement for democracy in China (1989), the collapse of the Communist regimes (1989), the end of Apartheid (the 1990s), 15-M movement in Spain, civilian defence, etc. (Roberts, et.alii. 1967; Boserup & Mack, 1974; Brock y Young, 1999; Filiu, 2011; López Martínez, et. al., 2008; López Martínez, 2009; Martin, 2001; Moser-Puangsuwan y Weber, 2000; Powers y Vogele, 1997; Roberts y Garton Ash, 2009).

Despite the fact that nonviolence is a relatively youthful political theory, all these examples are representative of a way of reducing human costs during struggle. A specific nonviolence, one which seeks a creative and constructive programme with the adversary, has not been present in all of them, but, at least, some forms of political action have generated a synergy of masses, a conscious action of the construction of *social power*.

6. Conclusions

Some definitions, each of which may offer clearer and more precise dimensions of nonviolence can be deduced from what had been previously affirmed. Nonviolence must be written as one word because it indicates a "no" to violence but also something positive and constructive. From what we have seen, nonviolence is an ethical and political position. It is a philosophy that seeks truth and commitment to life.

Finally, some possibilities of interpretation about in what nonviolence consists are offered on continuation, and in light of those, some reflections.

In the first place, nonviolence is a *method of conflict intervention*, a collection of procedures and techniques that allow the management, transformation or, inclusively, the resolution and transcendence of certain conflicts. Accordingly, the clearest idea is to lower the levels of the use or presence of violence in any given conflict to the minimum, (whether it is familiar, intergroupal, intergenerational, international, etc.) and attempt to construct bridges of dialogue and comprehension between all the parties in conflict. As a methodology, nonviolence possesses its own analytical instruments, tools of intervention, procedures and rules, etc.

Secondly, nonviolence is a *method of struggle*, that is, not only the previously stated –mere conflict management or intervention– but also an unarmed and bloodless fight against injustice, oppression and diverse forms of violence. Its principal peculiarity lies in renouncing the use of violence to obtain justice, equality, liberty, human rights, etc., and shunning passivity and acquiescence whilst leaving open the doors to negotiation, compromise and construction with the adversary. Such a method, as we have previously affirmed, features a whole range of components: interpretative, strategic, tactical, etc., which are particular to nonviolence.

In the third place, nonviolence is the *humanisation of politics*, given that one of its most important and interesting components is its (theoretical-practical) political dimension, its objective is the formation of a social science which is less, or simply, non- violent. It aims to do this without assuming that political violence is inevitable or heroically justifiable, illustrating that political science is a discipline capable of liberating humanity from violence, that politics and nonviolence are an art of what is possible and of equilibrium. It is political conduct without having to kill, or having to justify unnatural death. Its methodology does not consist in applying more pain to an affliction; its procedure does not breed cancer on top of cancer. The matter is quite simple: cease killing in order to discover the formula to cease killing and resolve the problems which agonise us. It is a normative and theoretical revolution.

Fourthly, nonviolence is a journey of *personal introspection*. This means a practice and dominance of self-consciousness, of one's own limits and of self-control, meditation, and of a Socratic and/ or Buddhist journey to the interior. It is an internal dialogue which explores and investigates analyses and concludes; that seeks a mental, physical and spiritual equilibrium. It, therefore, implies finding an intimate and profound sense to life, to what we do, and to how and why we do it. It contains a high level of commitment which recuperates the sense of seeking as a way and not as a destination in order to be reached.

Fithly, nonviolence is a *cosmovision of the human being*, of humanity and nature. Within it a conception of the human race can be found as being open to changes and transformations, of moral consciousness, with the possibility of structuring and providing cohesion to its rationality and sensibility. It is a philosophy of history based upon human liberty and dignity, realisation and aspiration, a permanent quest and an inexhaustible source of inspiration, and also upon the belief that it is love which truly makes the

world go round, and that this love may take a thousand forms: alliances, cooperation, philanthropy, etc. It is a cosmovision whose ethical doctrine does not forget those sensitive beings, not only human, but also animals and Nature, in a Gaian sense of a sentient and sensitive spirit. It also considers the osmotic relationship between the ends and the means, which, above all, recuperates *natural humanism*, an indissoluble nexus between the human beings we are and Nature, to which we belong.

Finally, if nonviolence is the above, we can deduce that behind these definitions there is a world view more human. It understands the human being as free and with dignity, able to renounce violence for justice, committed to the world to make it better. Nonviolence is not only a means but an end in itself. It is the duty and conviction for justice without having to damage or kill other human beings to get it.

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